Secondary Science Curriculum Council

February 22, 2010

Participants:

Edward McGrath: Science Supervisor (presenter)

Lew Miller: Consultant

Ernie Pappas: Conrad, chemistry, forensic science

Michelle Burrows: A.I. DuPont Middle, 7th grade

Gene Jones: H.B. DuPont Middle, 8th grade

Thomas Janeka: Stanton Middle, 8th grade

Steven Field: Cab Calloway, Chemistry, biology

Terry Neale: McKean, Chemistry

Diane Zutz-Cummings: Brandywine Springs, 6th grade  
Teren Neal: Central School, physical/earth science, biology

Regrets:

Bob Karcha: Dickinson, chemistry, physics

Absent:

Leigh Longenecker: Skyline, 7th grade

Participants were welcomed and introduced. Eddie provided a brief description and purpose for the development of the curriculum council and why the council members were chosen. Council was further described by Mr. Miller. He added that the committee was designed to make decisions about curriculum, assessment, instruction, etc. The goal of the development of the curriculum council is to develop a systematic way to deal with making decisions that affect entire district from bottom (student), up.

At this time, the council is composed of secondary teachers; it is the goal that the secondary science council will join with elementary council next year.

Essential Question for this meeting was reviewed. Participants participated in an icebreaking activity that consisted of a pre-test to assess prior knowledge and understanding. Eddie gave ideas for how this activity can be applied in the classroom. At the conclusion of the activity, the participants joined with a partner to debrief. Each member prepared three post-it notes listing positive aspects, needs, and concerns of their school’s science program. These notes will be collected for review and future consideration by the council. (*participants were encouraged to add notes to the appropriate category throughout the meeting as they thought of additional positive aspects, needs and concerns).*

Why are we here?

* Description of the makeup of curriculum council and duties of its members. It was stressed that members should remember that students are at the heart of the council; what are we preparing them for?
* Curriculum council chair: Each curriculum council will be chaired by the content supervisor and one other teacher, to be elected by the council; this spot is open to all teachers. A chart of the Red Clay Curriculum Council Decision-Making System was given to all members.

Responsibilities of the Curriculum Council:

* Monitor effectiveness of the instructional program such as potential changes that may need to be made to the current curriculum map.
* Make recommendations about standards based curriculum and instruction- Must be researched-based.
* Make recommendations about purchase of materials and PD needs-
* Recommendations about science lab safety- Make decisions about concerns in the lab that affect student and teacher safety within the learning environment.

Process for recommendations:

* Decisions and recommendations will be brought before the science cabinet. Within the district, resources are shared by all subject councils; needs of various subject areas will be taken into account when considering recommendations.
* Big decisions $$$ go to cabinet, (purchases, resources, etc.) Small decisions do not, (changes to curriculum map, etc).

How will Council Meetings be run?

* Chaired by Science Supervisor and the elected co-chair
* Minutes to be taken by a council member- can be anyone; ideally several members will contribute.
* Four regular meetings per year; more if members are willing to volunteer time.
* ALL teachers and administrators are invited to Council meetings, but only Council members will have voting privileges. All teachers will be invited and allowed to bring concerns to the table. Teacher will have a time limit to state concern.
* Procedure for preparation of meeting agenda.
* Old business first! New business can be presented, but will be tabled until the next meeting. The members can decide to create a committee to address concerns brought before the council.

What issues will the council discuss?

* Science standards
* High schools are moving to STEM initiatives (statewide).
* Science coalition units
* Curriculum maps (changes, improvements)
* Cross-curricular units- many members expressed positive feelings about experiences in cross-curricular activities.
* Coordination of curriculum with electives.

All recommendations made should reflect researched-based support

Terri asked if there would be incentives (monetarily or otherwise) provided to council members for research. Eddie will look into possibilities.

Issues in Instruction:

* Best practices
* Materials
* Lab safety
* Textbooks
* Probeware

Assessment:

* Coalition assessments
* DSTP or DCAS prep
* DCAS results and recommendations
* HS common assessments

Professional Development

* Middle School Kit Training moving into the district
* Science literacy
* Content Enrichment – help people w/ Praxis II prep
* District In-service Days – better / other uses for training days
* Safety training for teachers & administrators is lacking / needs revision

Re-Group w/ Partner for Question # 5 & Brain Break Questions:

1. Time to meet w/in grade level w/in district to discuss C & I & Assessment
2. Vertical articulation
3. Extra responsibilities for science teachers need to be reduced
4. Council should not burden other teachers w/extra responsibilities(surveys, etc) and become disliked
5. Curriculum maps need to be explored @ all grade levels
6. List of materials & equipment that can be shared & borrowed w/in district
7. Some influence on issues of maintenance. (ex: goggle cabinets mounted too high)

Next time – Voting – election of co-chairs, voting quorum, procedures

Procedures for bringing new business, creating sub-committees

Homework for us – meet w/departments regarding this meeting

Invite everyone to next meeting

Concerns:

Time to meet with department teachers

Possibly make up snow day time and meet with department team.

\*\*\*Issues frequently discussed during activities\*\*\*

1. More than any other resource, teachers repeatedly stated a strong desire for additional time for multi-level, district-wide collaboration with other science teachers. (Peer collaboration was identified by most as the #1 benefit of science kit trainings).
   * Ideas: PD, online collaboration, and time after school to make up snow day hours.
2. Numerous science teachers within the district are required to teach multiple grades and levels. Many stated that planning/preparation time was a common concern.
   * Ideas: Analyze research concerning how much time is optimal to improve instruction and assessment.
   * Review science kit activities and determine which activities focus strictly on standards, and identify activities need to be modified or eliminated.
   * District-wide collaboration to share ideas to help teachers maximize meaningful instructional time.
3. Resources for providing appropriate instruction and assessment to all learners.
   * Identify resources that can be shared between schools in the district.
   * Provide time for experienced teachers to share knowledge and experience with new teachers.
   * Online science page for teachers to share lesson ideas, activity modifications, and technology integration.

Next meeting on April 19, 2010 3-5pm